

A Man For His Time

BORN IN TORONTO IN 1889, Austin Cottrell Taylor was educated at St. Andrew's College in Aurora, located north of his birth city, and made his first \$1,000,000 playing the stock markets before reaching his 21st birthday. He was an excellent polo player and played in the east, and when he came to BC played up and down the west coast as far south as California in amateur polo matches. He was definitely a man's man, happiest in the outdoors with his dogs and horses, fishing or hunting. He married Kathleen Elliott, a graduate from the University of Manitoba, and the couple had a son and two daughters.

The 28-year-old Major Taylor came to British Columbia in 1917 as the Director of the Aeronautical Department of Britain's Imperial Munitions Board in charge of harvesting the straight, tough and fine-grained Sitka spruce from the Queen Charlotte Islands for the manufacture of training aircraft for the war effort. He was directed to fulfill the IMB's mandate and with Harold R. MacMillan, Chief Forester, to deliver "Airplane Spruce" to the fledgling aircraft industry both at home and in England. An expert organizer, Taylor quickly set up hundreds of camps, scores of tugboats, and thousands of men to cut down the trees. Canadian Pacific Railway Company tugs hauled great rafts of logs across the waters of the Pacific Coast and discharged their cargo at the many mainland mills. The towing of log booms in stormy weather in the open ocean proved to be a nightmarish logistical headache for Major Taylor. The obstacle was solved with a Davis raft that resembled a large sausage stuffed with logs. These rafts delivered logs to mainland mills for processing with the result that hundreds and hundreds of CPR cars rolled eastward monthly loaded with prime airplane lumber bound for the airplane factories in eastern Canada. Dressed lumber was also shipped to England. Great Britain's spruce requirements were 8,500,000 board feet of timber monthly. British Columbia's January 1917 production was 1.36 % of that requirement, 12 % by June, and 80.6 % by November, but with the added fir shipments Canada's contribution reached 97 % of England's total lumber requirements.

Taylor's greatest business venture came in 1931 during the Depression, when he raised the necessary capital to take over a failing gold mine north of Pemberton. He made it into Bralorne Mines Limited, and it became one of Canada's leading gold producers. It also made him a multi-millionaire.



Above

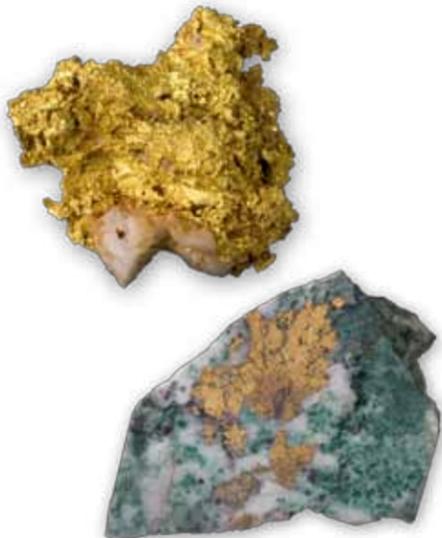
Borsalino in Italy made Austin C. Taylor's fedora for Calhoun's Ltd. in Vancouver.

Opposite

A page from a one-off booklet presented to Major Austin C. Taylor in 1919 by the heads of west coast forestry companies for coordinating the supply of Sitka ("Aeroplane") spruce for the manufacture of wood-framed aircraft that helped the Allies win World War I.

Below

Two gold samples taken from Taylor's Bralorne Gold Mine. The top specimen is over 80% gold.



Mr. Taylor, an avid horseman, became interested in thoroughbred racing in 1928. Now wealthy, he purchased a ranch near Kelowna and the large A.C.T. Breeding Stables at Milner, a suburb of Langley, where he raised the finest thoroughbred stock in BC and trained them on his own track. His horse Indian Broom was the only BC horse ever to enter the Kentucky Derby. It ran third in 1936. Another famous Taylor horse was Special Agent, which won many honours at tracks all over the continent. The horse was apparently named after the 1935 movie "Special Agent" about Canada's William Stephenson, the "Man Called Intrepid." Taylor raced horses mainly in Vancouver and at the Santa Anita track in California. He also used some of his fortune to purchase a Tudor revival style manor in Shaughnessy Heights. The home had been built in 1915 for lawyer and whiskey baron Edward Tulk. Taylor later purchased sugar



The Cookie Drive

by Lerae (née Parrott) Brigden

In 1941, when Shannon was subdivided, my parents built a five-room bungalow on 60th Avenue between Granville and Adera Streets. Young families occupied the surrounding homes. In those days people did not move about very much, so we grew up with all the same neighbourhood kids, and for blocks around we knew who lived in every house except one. It belonged to Austin Taylor and sat in the centre of an ivy-covered brick wall enclosure too high to see over. To us kids it was a scary, grand, off-limits, palatial mansion — another world entirely. It fronted on Granville Street with big iron gates and a gatehouse and backed onto Adera to the west, 57th Avenue to the south and 54th Avenue to the north. For us curious kids this was as good as a haunted house, and the big “double dare” was to find a foothold in the wall, climb over and run as fast as you could to get to the other side of the property before the Doberman pinschers could catch you. It was a bad idea! I once got caught halfway across, so I jumped in the large decorative pool with the dogs in a barking frenzy. The commotion quickly alerted the gatekeeper who unceremoniously escorted me out the gate. Needless to say, I had some mighty fancy explaining to do when I arrived home soaking wet. My sister Jo once tried to sell them Girl Guide cookies and somehow snuck past the coach house and guard. She was met at the main door by a maid and was told to go back to the coach house since they didn't buy cookies at the house.

magnate Benjamin T. Rogers's showplace home named Shannon at 57th Avenue and Granville Street. He spent time at Milner during the summer, but his year-round residence was Shannon.

During the Second World War, the federal government made him a \$1-a-year man, and he held posts as the vice-president of Wartime Shipbuilding Limited as well as chairman of the British Columbia Security Commission that dealt with enemy alien matters. He was also active in organizing Commonwealth air training schools. He was chosen for these positions because of his past performances, his contacts, and his wealth. According to family folklore, Taylor gifted the federal government one million dollars (possibly two) for the war effort.

As the chairman of the British Columbia Security Commission responsible for security matters during the war, Taylor's committee in 1942 made the difficult decision to remove the Japanese from the coast and into internment camps both for their safety and for the country's welfare during the war. At the time it was perceived as a very real threat that Japanese aircraft carriers might make it to the BC coast and attack Greater Vancouver. The Canadian military was afraid that local Japanese-Canadian men might side with the invading army or, if they remained loyal to Canada, might be captured by their own countrymen. Taylor has been much maligned by Japanese-Canadians for the treatment they endured during their time in prison camps, but Canada and Japan were at war, and such measures were thought to be necessary to protect Canadians.

During the war years Taylor spent time in New York, where his daughter Patricia attended university. She later, in 1950, married William F. Buckley Jr., a CIA agent and writer. Buckley ran unsuccessfully for Mayor of New York in 1965.

In 1947 Taylor was awarded the Order of the British Empire for his wartime civilian service. He agreed to chair the BC Emergency Flood

Committee to fundraise for victims of the 1948 Fraser River flood. A modest and humble man, Taylor never sought publicity for his accomplishments even though he held directorships in a number of corporations. He was offered the lieutenant-governorship of BC several times but each time refused the honour. He was a generous and kind man with a wry sense of humour who shunned publicity.

Taylor suffered from arteriosclerosis and died after a long illness in 1965 in Vancouver at the age of 76. A few years after his death property developer Peter Wall purchased Shannon as well as the A.C.T. Breeding Stables in Milner. In 1972 Wall commissioned legendary architect Arthur Erickson to turn the estate into a condo development with the understanding that he preserve both the large home and the coach house.

Shannon was originally built for Benjamin T. Rogers, dubbed BC's "Sugar King." Upon his death his wife sold the mansion and its surrounding property to Major Austin C. Taylor. With Austin's death in 1965 land developer Peter Wall purchased the prestigious estate and with the assistance of world-famous architect Arthur Erickson converted the home and its surrounding area into rental townhouse properties.

